Nazism and Neo-Nazism in Film and Media
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2. Film and Television

Memory and Representation

We shall now explore how Nazism and neo-Nazism have been imagined on screen, beginning with Nazisploitation films, and then moving on to mainstream films and television. In the logic of the Nazisploitation film, all Germans are Nazis and all Nazis are members of the SS with all members of the SS being war criminals, medical experimenters and sexual sadists. These films need positioning in a wider context of other exploitation films that became popular in the 1970s, including Blaxploitation, nunsploitation, Mexploitation, ‘mondo’ film, and women-in-prison movies. The term itself stems from moving beyond the common practice for promotion. Germany went through a particular type of sexual freedom from 1918 to 1933, during the Weimar Republic, but this freedom was at the cost of curbing a minority. Historians of the Nazi era such as Gerhard Ritter wrongly blamed so-called sexual immorality in the Weimar period for its collapse, spreading ‘cultural decay’ (Kulturverfall) paving the way for the Nazis. This link was popularized in films, such as Cabaret (Bob Fosse, 1972).

For Nazisploitation, the films’ sexually provocative marketing ruled. This took precedent over any notion of aesthetic quality. Posters contained leather-clad women with large breasts and films, such as found in the poster for Ilsa: She Wolf of the SS (Don Edmonds, 1974), which deliberately set out to look like a sex film. Oozing authority, with her hands on her hips, Dyanne Thorne as Ilsa in the film’s poster is dominant. A gun holster hangs from a belt around her waist, she grips a riding crop in her hand, and she is wearing erotic leather gloves. A group scene of naked women, situated near her feet, adds a narrative, with the tag line, ‘The most dreaded Nazi of them all’. Even better than this is the line, ‘She committed crimes so terrible ... even the SS feared her!’ The poster contained a warning: ‘Some members of the public may find certain scenes in this film offensive and shocking.’ But the film actually only contains five sex scenes, compared to 44 of violence and torture, leading to the conclusion that the film and those like it are more akin to slasher films than pornography.

These films are positioned as utilizing Nazi themes in many respects for titillation, but also are significant for traversing across boundaries and exploring transgressive themes. The Holocaust is frequently situated as the final taboo. Any film that wishes to create controversy will break such a taboo to attract attention. It is easy to dismiss such films, or concur with
mainstream critics and censors that these films are just trash, but new work on the subject has revealed how it as important to consider what some believe are just the ‘surfaces’. Many questions arise when analyzing these films, including the ethical question concerning the use of the Holocaust in this context at all. On a wider historical level, the interest in these films did not just cease with the end of the 1970s, so in this sense they can offer up an understanding of society and culture beyond their context.

Later films build on the 1970s. This has been dubbed the Nazisploitation renaissance, with provocative films such as Quentin Tarantino’s *Inglorious Basterds* (2009), plus the large-budget Marvel Productions and Paramount Pictures blockbuster *Captain America: The First Avenger* (Joe Johnston, 2011), where a Nazi officer close to Hitler is a super villain and is the face of the Third Reich. There is also the low-budget neo-Nazisploitation film *Blitzkrieg: Escape from Stalag 69* (Keith J. Crocker, 2008), amongst others. There is the whole genre of Nazi zombie films, including the American *Horrors of War* (Peter John Ross and John Whitney, 2006), the British film *Outpost* (Steve Barker, 2007), which messes with philosophy and metaphysics, and the Norwegian film *Dead Snow* (Tommy Wirkola, 2009). Of course, gaming has utilized these narratives. The popular *Call of Duty: World at War* has a ‘Nazi Zombie Mode’, where you can kill and re-kill Nazis. Recent games such as *Wolfenstein* allow the player to enter the Holocaust and attempt to save Jews, much of the debate on gaming still revolving around the question of whether it is art or not, an area returned to in Chapter 5.

Nazisploitation can become a lens and we can start seeing it everywhere. For Daniel H. Magilow even the Bernard Schlink adaptation *The Reader* has a Nazisploitation plot, because it concerns a former concentration camp guard seducing the fifteen-year-old Michael Berg (David Kross/Ralph Fiennes). The film then is not about the Jews at all. ‘Nazi’ has entered the popular lexicon, including ‘Grammar Nazi’, meaning those pedantic about grammar, and ‘Nazi Tourette’s’, which is a comment on those who appear unable to control their use of Hitler and the Nazis in analogies. Kidult cartoons such as *Family Guy* have used Nazi iconography, such as in one episode (season 7, episode 3, broadcast in the USA on 19 October 2008) where characters wore SS uniforms with ‘McCain-Palin’ campaign buttons. Observed in 2017 this is even more darkly comic, given both McCain and Palin have stood up to Donald Trump. Just because this is often called lowbrow humour, it needs to be considered how and if this is any different to Shakespeare adaptations, such as *Richard III* appropriating Nazi iconography. Where the difference lies overall in all of this reworking of Nazi and neo-Nazi tropes is that *Ilsa: She Wolf of the SS* begins with the claim that what we are seeing
is based upon documented fact. The focus is on ‘medical experiments’, which occurred in concentration camps throughout Hitler’s Third Reich. The comment at the start from the producer, Herman Traeger, is that these characters are composites of real characters that did exist.

The point is made that the events of crimes against humanity are historically accurate, but for dramatic purposes this has been condensed into one locality. ‘We dedicate this film with the hope that these heinous crimes will never occur again.’ This is an interesting way of putting it, and is not the same as saying, ‘to the memory of the victims of the camps’. While these words are the focus of the opening, Hitler’s speech echoes out, cutting to Ilsa having sex, and her lover is then taken away by Ilsa’s guards. Ilsa works with other women, dismembering her victims, and her torturing of others is framed within a medical environment. This appears as a punishment, with Ilsa fetishizing her torture tools, loving the weapons she utilizes, reflecting on her power. New women arrive at the camp and then they must parade naked in front of the commandant, with some female prisoners appearing to resent being addressed by a female doctor. Gender politics feed the power of the camp. Her male associate is unattractive, coughing, and the epitome of the unhealthy human, emphasizing her superior status further. There is a focus on the prisoners’ pubic hairs, which are then removed by shaving, one prisoner resisting this process. With Ilsa: She Wolf of the SS, the basic premise asks: ‘Are women better able to stand pain than men?’

While questions can be raised over voyeurism and real and assumed pain in Nazi exploitation films, questions also need to be asked over the pornography of Nazi memorabilia. This is an example of the pervasive usage of terms like ‘pornography’ and ‘Nazi’, but postmodern critical theory has unearthed the pornography of everyday culture, which is splattered with Nazi iconography. Similarly, in academic discourse at least, there are numerous conferences on trauma, memory, the history of the Holocaust, re-interpreting and re-branding the Holocaust, through film and other forms of visual art. The aestheticizing of the Holocaust is not new, but the amount of imagery constantly reworked, through the History Channel and other platforms, such as YouTube, around the clock makes it possible to conclude that what we have here is Nazi pornography, using the term ‘pornography’ not to denote the actual depictions of sexual acts as much as to indicate the depiction of sensational events in order to arouse intense emotional reactions in the viewers.

As Dagmar Herzog has noted, the conflicts over sexual mores become ‘an important site for managing the memory of Nazism and Holocaust and coming to terms with their inheritance’. Nazisploitation films stray so
far away from aesthetics and narrative we can conclude they actually do a service to the period in history. They are enabling audiences to not just distance themselves from the events, but continually engage them with the obvious view that all history is reconstructed. However much a film such as *Son of Saul* (László Nemes, 2015) may appear authentic, it is a singular depiction regarding a specific period in history, which has been constructed as the embodiment of evil. What the writing on these films fails to point out is how the Nazis constructed their fantasies, which were then used and re-interpreted by film-makers. Susan Sontag explains that uniforms, for example, are not the same thing as photographs of the uniforms, and it is the latter that take on an erotic element, full of powerful sexual fantasy. Uniforms are ripe for fantasy, being concerned with legitimizing authority and violence. Nazi uniforms embody this most completely given aesthetic standards, brutality and efficiency are combined. There is a sexual element to Nazi leadership, with Hitler believing leadership was sexual mastery of the ‘feminine’ masses.7 Sexual elements come in to play in film, from *Mahler* (Ken Russell, 1974), to *Pink Floyd: The Wall* (Alan Parker, 1981), to *Richard III* (1995), to *Starship Troopers* (Paul Verhoeven, 1997), which all use some form of Nazi-related iconography.

On one level, it is not the films themselves that are watched and understood. In analysis of ‘media’ rather than film, it is the related material, be it the trailers, clips, posters, and conventions. *The Night Porter* (Liliana Cavani, 1974) is a significant film in this context. Here a Holocaust victim Lucia (Charlotte Rampling) re-unites with an SS man Max (Dirk Bogarde). This premise is profound, raising questions about the ongoing impact of the Holocaust on all concerned, victim and perpetrator. The plot is of note, given the two are then hunted down by SS veterans, who want to destroy the past. While the camp memories are not realistically produced, they hint not only at the stage elements of the theatre, but also at emptiness. An approach similar to this is taken at the Jewish Museum Berlin, where certain spaces are voids, indicating the erasure of the extensive Jewish culture and society in Berlin. This is the quintessence of a philosophical movement, existentialism, borne out of a number of philosophers, including the Nazi sympathizer Heidegger, and the French resistance member Sartre. Using a media of nothing to represent something is questionable, but at least it does not dictate a banal prescribed interpretation.

Condemned in *The New Yorker* as being a ‘slab of opulent claptrap’, reviews found it hard to move beyond their distaste for sadomasochism.8 *The Night Porter* contains a reversal of sorts. Maximilian Theo Aldorfer has been posing in concentration camps as a doctor in order to take photographs.
Here he met Lucia Atherton, but it is unclear whether he protected her. The notion that the Nazis and the Jews, even in camps, were never having any sexual relationships is still accepted. The fact that this was anathema is taken as evidence that these relationships did not take place but needs questioning. Along with having two British stars in the lead, Liliana Cavani was the most well-known Italian female director outside Italy and had made a four-hour documentary on the Third Reich for Italian television; others included Lina Wertmüller, Elda Tattoli, and Dacia Marraini. The film's controversial themes framed the debates on Nazis' relationships with prisoners. Nazism is prevalent less directly in Italian cinema. In Pier Paolo Pasolini's version of the work of Marquis de Sade, 120 Days of Sodom (1975), he claims the environment in the film is a version of the concentration camp system.

Levels of authenticity become more absurd, with the notion of true 'sadiconazista', including The Gestapo's Last Orgy (Casare Canevari, 1977), and Nazi Love Camp 27 (Mario Caiano, 1977). All claims of resemblance to Nazi iconography, regardless of their veracity, need further questioning, given that Nazi iconography did not appear from nowhere. The Nazis were not the first system to exploit certain dress codes, the colours black and red, and mass extermination. Any fictional representations following World War II that have even oblique references to these elements might be branded as having been influenced by the Nazis, but could this be termed inevitable? The problem with such generalizing is that it removes the complexities of influence. There is within this an emphasis on 'morbid decadence and sadomasochism as the hallmarks of both Italian and German fascism'.

Through the use of music and iconography, Richard Loncraine utilizes Nazi elements in his 1995 version of Richard III, but Ian McKellen, both star and screenwriter, plays Richard as an early 1930s evil bounder and cad, rather than as a Hitler figure. This reflects on the British aristocratic flirtation with Nazism. The 'action takes place in a dystopian-Mosleyite version of abdication Britain', with Peter Bradshaw comparing the ruined locations to Kubrick. There is the overt theme that paranoia and condemnation of the other, whoever the other may be, lead to isolation – but this may be the only way to power. With brief monologues and asides to the audience, we are drawn into his duplicity. The question is, which side would we go along with in a situation in which power seemingly always wins? In this sense, he is not a lone madman or even a genius, but Richard is acting out the fundamental desire of the people. Just prior to the sequence of total devastation, when he falls into a fire, Richard has had a haunting dream in which his own demons attack him. The core paradox is that a man who
wants to rule and be loved must abandon all real relationships. This is the route to power, indicating that this form of power is power over and through nothing. This is the real existential lesson from Hitler. An officer comforts him in the night, but his true fear is that he will die alone. This personal psychology is juxtaposed with his victor’s healthy marriage bed. Isolation, in every respect, is demonized. As the tag line puts it, ‘I can smile ... and murder while I smile.’

The film reveals the way in which military camps often resembled concentration camps, confronting us with the question over the status of the soldier, in their own isolation. Who, exactly, is the victim? Despite the promises Richard makes, many of those working with him know they are doomed, their children slaughtered. Richard is deformed from birth. Like Hitler’s abnormal testicle, mythical or otherwise, the physical abnormality is supposed to reflect on a psychological and spiritual abnormality, and his speeches about protecting ‘our women’ from being raped ring deeply hollow. We already know there is no real point pursuing relationships or contact in Richard’s life, making everything all the more meaningless. As with the Holocaust, a key question is why do so many people fall into that trap of following evil, and does this simply come down to fear for their own safety.

A museum on the site of the former SS headquarters in Berlin, the Topography of Terror, constructs this very narrative. Within this story, people joined the Nazis and did not resist them because they feared their own persecution. A question that this story contained in the Topography of Terror does not especially raise is around people joining the Nazi Party willingly, as a choice. The Jews have been persecuted ever since their arrival in the German region, during Roman times and in some instances burnt to death, as they were in the UK. For hundreds of years non-Jews had encouraged or ignored this. From the position of this ideology, fostered over hundreds, if not thousands of years, the Nazis’ behaviour was only to systematize via technology what was actually already normalized.

General skinhead films that include Nazi and neo-Nazi references are a genre in themselves, and widely available on YouTube. They contain a number of similar themes, regardless of the nation producing them or where they are set, ranging from the extremely bizarre to the obvious. For example, Neo Ned (Van Fischer, 2008) concerns an African-American in a mental hospital who believes they have Hitler inside them. There is also The Believer (Henry Bean, 2001) where a Jew is a member of a neo-Nazi group. Heart of a Lion (Dome Karukoski, 2013) is a Finnish film that follows a familiar plot line. Here, a neo-Nazi has an affair with a woman with a black son. All of these films concern the premise what if your beliefs contradict your assumed
real identity. They offer an ontological crisis as a form of plot device. In the same vein, some films reveal how anyone can become a neo-Nazi, making the important point that this behaviour could be carried out by anyone. No one is born a Nazi or neo-Nazi. In *Skinning* (Steven Filipovic, 2010) a Serbian mathematician joins a Nazi gang. Some very simple points are made about how joining a group like this offers an outsider some form of identity. There is a level of extremism that is startling, such as the killing of a man who is Roma. The film highlights how quickly even apparently normal people can be caught up in acting out the most extreme forms of violence, in the name of neo-Nazism. A deeper underlying question is whether this is latent within everyone anyway.

In *Imperium* (Daniel Ragussis, 2016) an FBI agent (Daniel Radcliffe) goes undercover, joining a neo-Nazi gang. More interestingly, the British film *I.D.* (Philip Davis, 1995) concerns a British policeman (Reece Dinsdale) going undercover, and joining a gang of football hooligans, the Chadwell Army. He ‘turns native’, getting so involved with the gang he literally loses his previous identity, and chooses to form a new identity as part of his new gang. The film ends with the protagonist marching down the road doing a Hitler salute to the police, now a total convert to neo-Nazism. None of these films especially glamorize such beliefs. Viewed now via various online formats they also work as period pieces, reflecting on the politics of the time within which they were made. The advertising for *I.D.* has the line, ‘When you go under cover, remember who you are’, the film implying there is no fixed identity.

Anti-Semitic conspiracy theorists have held the view that there is a Jewish predominance in the media and across the creative and cultural industries. This has been seized on by neo-Nazis. Long before film-makers of any nationality began their attempts to offer fictionalized drama about the Holocaust, Jean-Luc Godard made a famous statement: If ever a film is to be made about Auschwitz, it will have to be from the point of view of the guards.\(^1\) In 2010 Godard received an honorary Oscar. There was a backlash from many in Hollywood who saw him as anti-Zionist and even anti-Jewish, given his lifelong commitment to the fate of the Palestinians. It was for this that he was seen as crossing into anti-Semitism.\(^2\) Godard personally criticized films about the Holocaust, like *Schindler’s List* and *Shoah* (Claude Lanzmann, 1985), on artistic grounds. Off-the-cuff remarks have been interpreted as evidence of his anti-Semitism, including a comment about the image of the Central European Jew as being part of Hollywood’s problem with being caught up in debt. Organizations such as B’nai B’rith International have condemned the awarding of Godard with this honour. Danish director Lars von Trier has also been accused of being anti-Semitic
by saying that he understands Hitler and in 2011 issued an apology for any offence caused at the behest of the organizers of the Cannes Film Festival.

The film *The Reader* is not really from the point of view of a guard, as it is primarily about the experiences of the guard's lover, and overall works as a metaphor for German guilt. A scathing review in *The New Yorker* claims the film is fatuous, outrageously turning Hanna the Nazi into a victim, and is just an excuse to view Kate Winslet ‘deflowering’ a boy. When the guard is also a Jewish prisoner, as in 2015’s *Son of Saul*, Godard's point takes on a deeper resonance. The reason *The Reader* made a strong global impression was it opened a new field of inquiry, because so much had been hidden and repressed around this subject. There is the popular myth that it had taken a long time for the suffering of Jews in the European concentration camps of the 1930s and 1940s to reach deep into public consciousness, although this might be overlooking the facts. Images were in circulation even during the war. The artist Francis Bacon, arguably Britain's most important painter since the war, possessed two images from *The People’s Verdict: A Full Report of the Proceedings at the Krasnodar and Kharkov German Atrocity Trials*, published in 1944, documenting the mass extermination of the Jews in the Ukraine. Early footage included the Pathé News footage of Belsen, screened at the Rialto Cinema near Leicester Square. It was not just artists who were aware of what had happened in Nazi Germany, but also the general public. Just following the end of the war, there was the popular display of photographs of the camps in Trafalgar Square by the *Daily Express*, with the motto, ‘SEEING IS BELIEVING.’

It would be wrong to assume that the story of camps like Belsen, Buchenwald and Auschwitz was unknown. What this story meant or was used for is another question. At the same time, in the 20 years immediately after the end of the war there was an understandable reluctance among survivors to describe in any detail what they had been through. This is not just the case for those experiencing survivors' guilt, but for anyone who had truly experienced horror during the war. Following murder on such a grand scale it is understandable why there would be a reluctance to speak about these atrocities, at first believed to be beyond imagination. In Israel in particular the resolve to build a new country meant that older people were not encouraged to talk about the past. Often people felt ashamed of being alive when so many of their families and fellow inmates had been killed. When Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man* was first published soon after the war most of the 2,500 copies printed remained unsold in an Italian warehouse, people not wanting to recognize the past as there was no public appetite for this topic.
The appearance and conviction of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961 brought about a shift in public understanding in Israel, while the Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt between 1963 and 1965 had a comparable impact in Germany. Thirty years after those trials lawyer Bernhard Schlink constructed a fictional narrative concerning arguably the biggest crime in history. How does a succeeding generation deal with the transgressions of their parents, how do they find a way of living anything like a normal life? *The Reader* is not simply a novel specific to the post-war German experience. As David Hare maintains, it is also a more far-reaching exploration of the difficult processes we all now know under the name of truth and reconciliation. This goes beyond German borders and the Jewish faith to the heart of what it means to be human.

The novel *The Reader* at first seems simple. In a German provincial town in the mid-1950s fifteen-year-old Michael Berg is given a sexual initiation by an older woman, Hanna Schmitz, whom he has met when he has fallen ill on the way home from school. He reads aloud to her, and they have a short summer romance which impacts on the whole of his life. Even at the time, and with so little experience, Michael can feel that the relationship has an undertow that is not wholly usual, taking him away from the life of his peers, but allowing him to enter a complex psychic world. Without warning, Hanna then disappears from his life. As an undergraduate studying law Michael attends a war crimes trial in Heidelberg discovering that one of the defendants is Hanna, who worked as a guard in a concentration camp. On the subsequent death marches she locked Jewish women and children in a church so they burnt to death. Michael realizes he is in possession of evidence about her that would serve at least to mitigate Hanna’s sentence. Can he bring himself to help someone whom he has loved, but whom he feels has betrayed him? What duty does he have towards someone who has done so many terrible things?

Questions over the forgiveness that is never fully found or given make the novel and film more complex than they might first appear, making it a good case study. *The Reader* (Stephen Daldry, 2008) begins traditionally, examining the notion that heroes have weaknesses. This is nothing unusual and part of what many teachers on screenwriting have considered, often called the hero’s journey, stemming from Joseph Campbell’s now classic work on myth, which Christopher Vogler adapted into his twelve-stage hero’s journey. Michael (as a young man played by David Kross) learns to forgive himself, on many levels. He eventually explains to his daughter the whole history of his relationship with Hanna. The fallout from this relationship has blighted his whole life and his daughter’s, as she blamed
herself for his inability to trust anyone. This reveals that there is hope for the next generation, given they have a great opportunity of fully understanding the past. Whether this is a choice or not is a difficult question, given it may come as a necessity for survival. The issue of German guilt threads itself throughout the narrative, with the young people coming to terms with the past so they can have a future.

In this aspect, the film is pure genre filmmaking, but this is not a negative criticism. There is a clear teleology and strong narrative drive which, along with the star status of Kate Winslet playing Hanna and Ralph Fiennes playing the older Michael, meant the film gained a wide global audience. The media attention this created highlighted the importance of examining the Nazi legacy once again. Debates around the film became part of a wider media discourse about the Holocaust and contemporary neo-Nazism. The questions raised by any ‘Holocaust film’ always include: How could this happen and, more relevant now than ever, could this happen again? This is Michael's film, taking us through his early sexual relationship with the former Nazi prison guard Hanna, an initiation process into adulthood, which actually keeps him stuck in the past, moving to his time at college, and to current-day philandering, and then his attempt to reconcile himself with his daughter and the past. The hope of the film is in these attempts; whether this actually works or not is immaterial. There is no point denying this potential, outlined in the narrative, claiming there is no hope in the film in an unconvincing attempt at making the film sound radically more ambitious.

Hanna claims she was following orders, as many Nazis said they were doing, and following this logic she should be commended, not prosecuted. She never truly understands her culpability, but this could be due to basic unwitting ignorance. Whether the film itself fully promotes this myth of her lack of culpability is questionable, given we are asked to doubt this. Michael is aware she cannot read, and this fact could have prevented her from going to prison for the murder of hundreds of Jews in a burning church. In court, she explains she joined the SS in 1943, after working at a factory, and being offered promotion. Her illiteracy always means she must move on before being discovered. She is then asked whether she knew what kind of work she would be expected to do, and narrates how she went to work at Auschwitz. The camp system was ‘the site where the Nazi German world was most unreservedly, most unabashedly being created’. The camp was the emblematic institution of Germany, revealing the essence of Germany, so Hanna is the symbol of Germany. Her illiteracy is therefore problematic, implying she did not fully understand what she was doing, and therefore was not free in her choices.
Under further questioning, she admits she was part of the selection process of those chosen to die. Being questioned in court, to ascertain whether she joined as a guard out of her own free will, she states she heard there were jobs in the SS, and that was that. The complexity of this moment is easy to gloss over, asking us to question our own free will. While free will might be limited to humans and higher animals, so is rationality, consciousness and understanding.\textsuperscript{19} All four attributes are part of Nazism, despite its condemnation as being irrational. In her innocence, she also convicts the other guards with her, who then declare she was the leader to lighten their sentences. Given we already know she is illiterate, she is portrayed as naïve, but not evil. Could this be an exception to the rule: a good Nazi? A law student watching the trial with Michael claims it is exciting, because for him it is justice, but he is soon disillusioned. This is exposed the following day, along with the shallowness of the people seeking both justice and revenge. The relevance of the Holocaust and the Jews seems irrelevant, as Michael’s peer points out. This could be a criticism of the film, and those like it, that use Nazism as a backdrop. The focus on a few individuals, which is the main emphasis of all popular narrative film, removes the audience in many ways away from the collective, which is even the case in the film \textit{Son of Saul}, feted for being so authentic. Is the conclusion that there is just too much horror, and humans by nature relate to the story of one individual?

The memory of a single man may represent Germany itself, as he is looking back on his childhood, memories dictating the present. After a scene revealing Michael as an adult, nonchalantly dismissing a lover in the morning, revealing he is unable to have true relationships, Michael stares out of a window in Berlin as an adult, where he sees his younger self on a tram in Neustadt. We then enter this period of his adolescence, with Hanna the conductor helping him after he has vomited. The boy’s weaknesses are juxtaposed with the woman’s strength, given she has helped him when he is ill, and asks him whether he has always been weak. This is a strange question, and later in court it is revealed she has a fondness for weak children, who she made read to her in the Nazi camp. Indeed, Michael at first cannot even cope with her just staring at him, when she is pulling up her stockings, and must run away. In court, Michael relives every moment of this only then realizing she is illiterate and its consequences. She has kept both secrets from him, and he feels betrayed.

What is significant is how class is often raised up as a key factor in determining neo-Nazi beliefs and actions, and how this is tied to free will. In Britain, neo-fascist groups such as Britain First are described as formed from the disenchanted and disenfranchised working classes, uneducated
and alienated from the London-based, high-income politicians. Ideology and politics are not determined by the economy mechanistically. An approach that emphasizes the primacy of class structures is appropriate. This concerns relating their functional relationship to the capitalist mode of production, with knowledge of the social world achieved through theoretical practice, in Marxist terms known as ‘science’, not observation. Class is an element at work in the relationship between Michael, from a traditional upper-class background, and Hanna, who is illiterate, making her backstory strangely irrelevant. Hanna may appear genuine, authentic and raw in a physical sense, but she is the one who is hiding her past. His literacy writes her into existence.

Class is also tied to gender. The masculine concerns the dangerous pretence that it contains powers of discrimination and the criteria for pronouncing the truth and with femininity there is a contestation of the manner in which desire has been reduced literally or metaphorically to anatomy. Our centre of gravity is displaced towards a libidinal economy, to machine-like functioning, reflected in the Nazi system. Here there are echoes of the way Hanna clicks the tickets on the tram, and shuts the door to the church, forcing hundreds of Jewish women and children to burn to death, plus the manner in which she slams her fist on the desk in the courtroom. These can be construed as mechanical involuntary actions, where free will has been momentarily subverted and humanity dissolved. Her machismo contrasts with Michael’s femininity, as if they have swapped traditional roles. Popular culture has emphasized and normalized the older man being involved in a relationship with the younger woman with the Lolita myth, but here this is also reversed.

Michael’s fifteen-year-old body is fetishized, the camera focusing on his naked torso in the bath, when he returns to Hanna’s. Sex strengthens him, and his desire to see Hanna helps him recover. In this sense, this process is Nietzschean, the nineteenth-century philosopher who worshipped the spirit of Dionysian creativity and who was wrongly associated with the Nazis. In 1934 Hitler visited Nietzsche’s sister Elizabeth, who had edited his final unfinished manuscript and made the text more sympathetic to Nazi ideology. Elizabeth gifted Hitler her brother’s walking stick, a symbolic and totemic object, the latter then using elements of Nietzsche’s texts in his own propaganda. Nietzsche was vocally opposed to anti-Semitism but he generated the background that established that these were the times of the last men who needed to turn their backs on banal existence, the notion of the will of the most powerful being perfect for Nazi propaganda. Splitting God up into good and evil is wrong and unnatural for Nietzsche.
The Nazis attempted to destroy all darkness, including that in themselves, by destroying the Jews, unable to fully recognize the darkness within.

There is also the tension concerning history. Should a country or an individual delve into and relive the past continually, as Michael is doing here, or should the unhistorical and even supra-historical reign, as Nietzsche maintains, to overcome the malady of history.\textsuperscript{22} Psychologically, existential psychoanalysts, such as R.D. Laing, maintained that forgetting was better than remaining, although the essential story here is based on the premise of haunting and memory. The central tenet is that we believe what we need to believe in order to live, even if this includes accepting a lie. Truth and authenticity are irrelevant. People do anything to survive, even if it means living a deadened life. Levinas has made the origin of language, meaning, and difference consist in terms of the relation to the infinitely other.\textsuperscript{23}

After they make love for the third time, Michael asks Hanna her name, formalizing their relationship with specific language. There is a suggestion that she is still in many ways on the run, but eventually she tells him, which is the true moment of intimacy after the sex. A quick cut from this scene, to a lecture Michael is having on literature, reveals a parallel between his mental, formal, education, and that with Hanna. Discussing Goethe, it is maintained that character is all about the revealing of the secret, with stories always concerning either the perverse or morally sound elements of this secret.\textsuperscript{24} Michael appears to be living the perfect German adolescence and yet there is a void in his life, represented by the repression in his family caused, we assume, by their collective guilt over the war. It takes Hanna's insistence that he read to her for him to realize he is good at something. Like Hanna, he is an actor, adept at concealing his true self and wearing a mask, this in itself being his core ontological essence.

She eventually insists that the reading must come first, and then the sex, both allowing for transcendence. Once they get into a pattern of reading Michael becomes the equivalent of a rent boy, as she insists he read to her first before they make love, as if the reading is a payment. When she says he is ‘good at it’, meaning reading, he thinks she means making love. In this sense, he wants her to mean he is good at this physical act, rather than the mental one, although they fuse. He reads a whole series of books and cartoons to her, from Homer to D.H. Lawrence’s \textit{Lady Chatterley’s Lover}, which Hanna believes is disgusting, and that he should be ashamed. While Hanna teaches Michael about the ways of the body, Michael teaches Hanna about the ways of mind, but overall this binary opposition is too simplistic. The first half of the film is to underline Hanna’s humaneness and Michael’s love for her, and to emphasize his loss when she soon disappears from his
life. Following 45 minutes of mainly narrating the past, the film shifts to Michael (now an adult) reading the poem he wrote for Hanna when they were on a cycling holiday. Stepping into his car as an adult, he is still listening to the music she was mesmerized by in a church on their holiday. His entire life has been tainted by this affair, preventing him from being open with anyone. Paradoxically, this has protected him, the initial hurt from the loss of Hanna keeping him from future pain. At Heidelberg Law School in 1966 their special seminar begins with a reading list, specifically Karl Jaspers, and the question of German guilt. This essentially is the core of the film philosophically: How culpable are we? For Jaspers, whose wife was Jewish and who hid Jews from the authorities, there are a number of types of guilt: criminal guilt, political guilt, moral guilt, and the more complex metaphysical guilt relating to guilt by association.²⁵

The Holocaust as spectacle is a major theme, constructed as haunting everything, not just Michael’s sexuality. When the accused Nazi guards are brought to the courtroom Michael stands in the street, hoping to catch a glimpse of the criminals, unaware Hanna is inside. Is he guilty by association? The love of his life has murdered hundreds of Jews. As Michael’s peer puts it, it truly is a circus, with numerous photographers inside the court as well as outside. This is already a reflection on the ‘Holocaust industry’, which commentators such as the Auschwitz survivor and Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel have maintained is deeply disturbing.²⁶ Hanna was born 21 October 1922 and is now 43. Michael is disturbed by seeing Hanna again and he is unable to take part in any of the university students’ social activities, given he is paralyzed by the past. The total absurdity of the way states operate in the modern world is underscored by what occurs during Michael’s higher education. Questions are raised over the nature of civilization itself.

In his next seminar, the professor (Bruno Ganz) claims societies do not operate by morality but by law, giving the simple facts: 8,000 people worked at Auschwitz, but you are not guilty if you just worked at Auschwitz; to prove murder you have to prove intent and only nineteen of the 8,000 so far have been convicted and, of these, only six for murder. You have to be convicted by the laws of the time and intention is everything. The following scene is an attempt to ascertain Hanna’s intentions; did she actually intend to kill so many innocent people? The court scenes accentuate Hannah Arendt’s notion of the banality of evil, which could be re-phrased as the absurdity or comedy of evil, some of the defendants sitting knitting, with the law students chatting, smiling and flirting.

This is no circus where the carnivalesque takes place in a Bakhtinian sense, or a moment of transgression followed by a reasserting of the law, but
a blend between a doctor’s waiting room and a school. In dramatic terms, this is more Samuel Beckett than Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson. During these moments, it is clear that no one is concerned about the suffering of the Jews. They are more concerned about exonerating themselves and Germany, so they can continue their distractions. The relationship between the judge and Hanna is that of headmaster and naïve, unwittingly mischievous, schoolgirl. The central drama unfolds from their conflict. From this perspective, a difficult question is: Does the truth of the events matter, or is it more the way the narrative is constructed so the court can create some sense of justice? This obvious question is at the heart of the narrative and the theatre of justice that is played out for everyone’s benefit, especially the law students. Telling a story that offers the veneer of justice takes precedent over truth.

For novelist William Burroughs, language was an evil virus possessing him, which he had to exorcise through writing. What we find here with Hanna is not the antithesis of this view, but what can be considered to be the deeper horror, one that Burroughs is only implying. That is, the horror of the gap that can exist without language. Adorno stated the problem of poetry existing after Auschwitz. This is often taken out of context, and without the caveat that in his later work Adorno changed his mind. In *Negative Dialectics* he revised this point, claiming that suffering has as much right to expression as the tortured, and so the real question is: Can one go on living after Auschwitz? For Hanna, the answer is no, although how this relates to the Jewish experience is complex. Adorno points out that for the Jew who should have been killed survival depends on coldness, the basic principle of bourgeois subjectivity, and without this there would have been no Auschwitz at all. The guilt of the survivor is immense: ‘[H]e will be plagued by dreams such as that he is no longer living at all, that he was sent to ovens in 1944 and his whole existence since has been imaginary, an emancipation of the insane wish of a man killed twenty years earlier.’

The judge discusses a book by a Holocaust survivor with Hanna in an attempt to provoke a sense of guilt and create a fuller understanding beyond her rationalizations. In Burroughs’ sense of meaning, she cannot be possessed by language or strive through writing to free herself. Hanna could never be human, making fully conscious decisions, because she never truly learned language. The people she oppressed had this privilege, being able to explain who they were. The other defendants have denied their part, only the educated knowing how to lie. As the professor has maintained, this is not about morality but law. Unaware of what justice really is, a form of drama that fits a certain narrative, Hanna thinks she is there to tell the
truth. Hanna’s absence of education makes her brutally honest: ‘The old ones had to make way for the new ones.’ Asked whether she did what she did because she feared for her own life, her response is intelligent and ends the discussion: ‘What would you have done?’

The complexity of Hanna’s trial has resonances concerning the many myths propounded by contemporary neo-Nazi groups. Some of these include: this was a just war; the Germans were just doing their duty; the guards were only obeying orders (so can anyone be blamed for acting on orders made by those higher up?); and, ultimately, the underlying belief that this process was doing the world a service, removing the ‘vermin’ of the Jewish people. The more extreme of these myths are essentially shied away from, in both the novel and the film. All that can be done is to reinterpret history from the contemporary period but the status of this film and its influence should not be understated. We might be forgiven for thinking the central message is that those who carried out these atrocities were basically just ignorant and the role of victim is reversed.

Paradoxically, finding a handful of guards guilty exonerates the many. This process is not about finding justice for the Jews, but a way of reconciling Germans to their past, which is still pressingly and disturbingly with them. This can be illustrated by contemporary references to industry. In 2011 Siemens had plans to register the trademark Zyklon, the same name as Zyklon B poison gas used in Nazi camps. Bosch Siemens Hausgeraete (BSH) filed two applications for the name Zyklon across a range of products, including gas ovens. Jewish groups condemned Siemens, who then apologized. As recently as 2012, Umbro apologized for naming a new model of its training shoes Zyklon. The name, meaning cyclone, may have actually been used innocently, but the influence of the media is of note. It was only when the BBC News queried BSH about the plans for the range that they withdrew the trademark application. By 2012 Siemens, which used slave labour during the Holocaust, were involved in attempts to compensate victims, with the German government still working on ways to distribute about £3.5 billion in compensation.

When a Jewish witness points out those guards involved, she reveals how Hanna worked with the girls. She selected people, normally young girls, and they imagined something sexual would take place. Instead she would make them read to her. At first they thought she was more humane, selecting the weak to be with her, but then she would dispatch them: ‘Is that kinder?’ asks the witness. This parallels Michael’s life. Back at their university the student who at first said it was exciting reveals the central true point: the trial is a distraction. Why put these six guards on trial, just
because one person wrote a book? The question of the Jews is being left out. As he puts it, everyone knew: ‘our parents, teachers’. The student goes on, directly addressing Michael’s professor with the question: ‘How could you let this happen ... why didn’t you kill yourself when you found out?’

As Michael explains to his professor, Hanna has a choice to explain that she is illiterate, if she can. This is her choice, in this instance, not his. His choice to tell the courts would undermine her choice to not choose to tell them. The judge is primarily concerned with whether she chose to not unlock the church. Survivors are included in the court scenes, but the central focus is on the German guilt and the German denial. When Michael finally visits Hanna in prison, he interrogates her over whether she has spent a lot of time thinking about the past. She thinks he means their past together. The film suggests he is obsessed with their earlier relationship, and it dominates his later life. Following Burroughs’ logic, her being is the language that is the virus that he cannot exorcise. But he is judging her now. ‘The dead are still dead,’ she confirms. And then Hanna, with a perfect irony, uses her books to gain the height to commit suicide by hanging. Literacy literally kills her.

At every stage and at every level, it is the significance of literature that is of importance, including the memoir the witness has written. This is crucial not only in regards to Hanna, but to civilization. As Derrida points out in his discussion of Edmond Jabès and the question of the book, there is the common root of Judaism in writing. There is no history without this reflection and this furrow is the Jew. There is an interface here between the Jew and writing, a convocation (as Derrida puts it). There is a deeper conceptualizing of choice, where the question is given: What difference is there between choosing and being chosen, when we can do nothing but submit to choose? The writer is in the same position being bound to language and delivered from it by a speech that they are the master of.28 There is the continual process of unearthing the secret that is never arrived at. If we gain freedom by becoming aware of our ties, The Reader is a traditional narrative that allows for this development. Michael is a lawyer, as well as being the reader. To every question the Jew answers with a question, and the ‘Law then becomes a Question and the right to speech coincides with the duty to interrogate’.29

Fact is woven into The Reader just as memoirs of historical events contain records of how people ignore the facts. The Reader concerns memory and loss, memory being at the heart of Elie Wiesel’s work. This work is also relevant when we come on to discuss the film Son of Saul with regards to theology, veracity and authenticity. Wiesel was born in Sighet, Transylvania, and was
taken in 1944 to Auschwitz concentration camp and then Buchenwald. In his most famous work, *Night*, Wiesel reveals how no one wanted to believe the truth, as this was too horrific, including Jews in his town. Everyone wanted to trust the Germans. During British war commemorations, often turned into illustrious patriotic media events to celebrate nationhood, the position of the Jews is seldom mentioned. In this sense, there is still denial. All that is stressed is the heroic valor of men who under orders marched to their deaths. As Wiesel shows, in the Jewish community, for at least two decades after the war, no one wanted to listen to any of the stories of the atrocities, for fear of being told they were just seeking pity and the notion that it would traumatize young people.

*Night* reveals specifically there had already been warnings in Wiesel's Hungarian town about what would happen but these were not heeded. Deportees had been taken off, never to return, but somehow people forgot about this, living in hope. No one wanted to accept or face the truth. In the spring of 1944 the Fascist party gained power in Hungary, and still people were in denial, believing the German troops would remain in Budapest but within three days they were in his streets. Even when they had arrived, the Jewish communities were dismissing the idea that the Germans meant them actual harm, living in denial. Officers treated them with respect, buying ladies chocolates and, as Wiesel puts it, the Jews of Sighet were smiling. Even his father tried to be happy about wearing the yellow star, claiming it was not lethal, and some thought the barbed wire fences protecting their areas encouraged peace.

Weeks later, old people and babies were battered and slaughtered and people sent to the camps. Even when on the train, they believed they were staying in Hungary to work in a brick factory. The level of denial might seem astonishing, but this could be the only way to maintain hope. When at Auschwitz Wiesel maintains young men still had knives on them, despite having all possessions removed and were ready to revolt but the older religious men still had some vague hope that they might be rescued by God and told them to put these blades away. Wiesel did not absolutely deny God’s existence but he did doubt his absolute justice. Others, such as Akiba Drumer, claimed that God was testing them, seeing if they could overcome their propensity to despair, and that any form of punishment is a form of love. 30 This extreme belief is disturbing.

What is seldom discussed is that the altruism of some guards towards young children was down to their paedophilia. 31 Drumer claimed that he had discovered a verse from the Bible which, when translated into numbers, ‘made it possible for him to predict Redemption in the weeks
to come'. These were Jews who, in the main, believed the messiah was returning, so in this sense the more severe the hardships the greater evidence there was for this return. In a wider context of altruism and love, this is difficult to fathom, but the greater the punishment within this theology the more tangible God's love. When Wiesel is in the infirmary at Buna, the man in the next bed explains: 'I have more faith in Hitler than anyone else. He alone has kept his promises, all his promises, to the Jewish people.' This is the position of someone who believes he is totally abandoned.

When the camp is being evacuated, Wiesel has a choice; to remain in the infirmary or leave with most of the rest of the camp – he chooses to do the latter. If he had stayed, he would have been part of the liberation three days later, but he also would have had to endure further hardships. They leave running like machines, Wiesel behaving like an automaton.

We were the masters of nature, the masters of the world. We had transcended everything – death, fatigue, our natural needs. We were stronger than cold and hunger, stronger than the guns and the desire to die, doomed and rootless, nothing but numbers, we were the only men on earth. Wiesel does not shy away from the moral choices people were making at every turn. Should you stay with the sick and lame, and limit your chances, even if this means death, or do you abandon people, even your father, if this means the possibility of survival? After days of starvation on a trek, after leaving the camp, one man hides some bread in his shirt, only to be beaten to death by another man, who turns out to be his son. The son is then beaten to death by other starving men who want the bread.

The narrative is a father and son story and here the moral choices remain stark. Wiesel is advised by a doctor to eat his father’s rations just so he will survive with his having been beaten by fellow inmates. In the original version, published in 1958, Wiesel comments on how within just ten years since the end of the war, those who were Nazis are once again in power in Germany, and that in many respects silence reigns. Plus, anti-Semites throughout Germany, France, and the United States, are claiming that the assassination of 6 million Jews is just a hoax. According to Wiesel, if there is anything we can learn from Auschwitz it is responsibility. In 1978, Wiesel maintained that all his work was about inventing and reinventing characters from his childhood in Sighet. Even after the success of Night, Wiesel is not sure that writing it was the correct thing because the Holocaust
is, in his words, a fashionable subject. This he believes is more offensive than ignorance of the subject, although he is compelled to write about the Holocaust, and for him there is no choice. *Night* came from a 900-page manuscript, which in 1978 he claimed he may publish one day as a whole, as it does not belong to him. Wiesel’s claim to not own his manuscript is not unusual in the arts overall, with many writers and painters believing they are the vessels and transmitters of discourse.

Wiesel’s text had a major impact internationally and is a nuanced approached both theologically and with regards to the transmission of memory and the notion of authenticity a theme addressed next. Feted for its apparent authenticity, László Nemes’ 2015 film *Son of Saul* set in Auschwitz in 1944 concerns a man who finds the body of the boy he thinks is his son who he wants to give a proper burial. A doctor allows him five minutes at night to take the dead boy away. In 2016, the director Nemes found writings by the crematorium workers in the camps and her had relatives who died in the war in 1944. He was told about these deaths in his family at the age of five, with his mother not sparing him any of the details. There is then an attempt at authenticity. For Nemes, the history of the camps is about death. This might seem obvious, but globally their history appears to be more about annihilation, a step beyond death, where death is not recognized.

Popular culture has this as a central paradox, appearing obsessed with death but in general in denial. Fiction films had been primarily about survival, but the camps were about death, so this in itself has been about rewriting history through film. What might be conceived to be the ‘unimaginable’ needs to be imagined and the skill for any artist is to suggest it, so the imagination of the viewer can construct what they need to. The point for Nemes is not showing or telling too much, which is the case for all good creative work. After many attempts to find funding, only the Hungarian Film Fund agreed to finance *Son of Saul*, suggesting it is still difficult to make art about this difficult topic. (*A Tale of Love and Darkness*, a film in Hebrew about the birth of Israel after the Holocaust directed by Natalie Portman and based on the memoir of novelist Amos Oz, was released in the same year.)

The protagonist is a Hungarian who only arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944, at which point the Soviet Army was thought to be approaching, so the murder was accelerated. The majority of critics stated the film was an immediate classic, as it claimed to be speaking about the unspeakable from a new viewpoint. There is some truth in this, but it is overstated. The film begins with randomness and chaos, which can be considered to be
authentic. The handheld camera is always over the shoulder or behind the protagonist, inviting us to construe his presence within the midst of the camp. Are we supposed to conceive of ourselves as some form of conscience, or consciousness, of Saul (Géza Röhrig) as we become one with the camera following him around over his shoulder? Here we are brought into Saul's world, sitting on his shoulder with the camera, like a devil in hell, or like a God who cannot or chooses not to intervene.

Half way through the film a child does hold a camera to take photographs as evidence, but the camera making the film being positioned predominantly behind the protagonist is problematic. The deception and denial of all those involved is portrayed nonchalantly. And then we have the shower-gassing scene. Nothing is shown, but the indication of the horror of their death is gathered from the screams of the victims and the banging of those being murdered. If the director wants to leave a lot to the imagination of the viewer, then this includes the most difficult sequences, such as this. Is it that such horrors are too much to convey or that, ultimately, at the time at least, this was supposed to be kept a secret? As with all major narrative films, the focus on the individual means we do begin to relate to that individual, but this also means we might neglect the collective and the group. There is the implied view that anyone would do the same as Saul, working for the Nazis, just to stay alive a few months longer. There are other films that attempt to tackle difficult issues, such as the end of the world, but focus on more than just one singular protagonist, offering a glimpse at the collective and social organization.

This focus on the individual includes those who have just been murdered, given one boy has survived is quickly murdered by the hands of the Nazi who wants an autopsy to find out why. Another name for Saul's kind is 'bearer of secrets'. There is the potential of hope here, given anything can happen if one is given a stay of execution. Once Saul believes he has found his dead son he approaches a rabbi who is shot due to Saul's encounter with him. Are we supposed to accept that someone would do anything to enable the religious burial of their son or is this psychosis? It might be concluded that this is actually an attack on the futility of religion that places the position in the afterlife as more important than the real world. Even if value in the afterlife brings value in the current real world, Saul's action have meant one man has died in vain, unwittingly punished for not carrying out his rabbinical duties. The paradox is that within Judaism the afterlife is not emphasized anyway, but it is the burial process that is important. This is a statement against the carnage around him.
Childhood and Adolescence

While not a film especially aimed at a younger audience, *Schindler’s List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), given its impact and global audience, needs mentioning. In many respects, this film has come to exemplify the Holocaust. The film has decisive facts about the Holocaust prior to the closing credits, such as 6 million Jews died, and there are only 4,000 left in Poland, but globally there are 6,000 Schindler Jews. Even with dead and alive naked bodies in camps, the film explores humanity within with the horror of this experience. Women prick their fingers to extract blood and then make their faces rosy, to appear healthy, and carry out other activities to keep alive. This strong focus on the living offers hope. Ralph Fiennes plays Nazi officer Amon Goeth who is in love with a Jewish servant and unleashing his anger on random Jews.

At one point, when his gun gets stuck, he is laughable. Should we take him as epitomizing the German Nazi state, or does this focus on one individual allow the audience to conclude that it is his personal psychology, not Nazi propaganda, that allows for such extreme behaviour? Despite this, Schindler (Liam Neeson) manages to change Amon’s psychology. Schindler’s philosophy is there is more power in forgiving people. An important aspect is that the film is shot in black and white, which many people campaigned against, believing it would stylize the Holocaust. Spielberg had only experienced the Holocaust through testimonies and archival footage, in black and white. In this sense, the film is a dramatization of Spielberg’s research, but it ends with the Schindler survivors and their relatives. For this reason, it is a statement against neo-Nazi propaganda.

*Inglorious Basterds* (Quentin Tarantino, 2009) is a form of reverse Western, also with a focus on hope. While not aimed at adolescent audiences, the Tarantino brand and oeuvre originally appealed to youth culture, which is not tied to chronological age. Brad Pitt’s gang of American soldiers goes hunting German Nazi scalps. Pitt’s character, Lieutenant Aldo Raine, has a trace of ‘American Indian’ blood in him, and there is comedy in his ruthlessness. While Pitt’s gang hunts Nazis, this is paralleled with Nazis hunting Jews. The wider context, given the period of the film’s release, is Islamophobia, and the attack on anyone ‘other’, including those fighting against paedophiles. Tarantino employs a typical revenge narrative, which leads to the question: Is the context important at all? Paradoxically, while Tarantino has been attacked for changing history, his fictions address topics that history has overlooked. The uncanny malevolence of the Nazis, while not overtly celebrated, is depicted. As with other culture about the
Nazis, neo-Nazis may use the film as a form of celebration, despite the film focusing in the main on the anti-Nazi team, but this is not the essence of the film. The film celebrates the individual over the state, mocking those who operate out of ‘national pride’, such as Frederick Zoller played by Daniel Brühl. The film does raise neo-Nazi issues. For example, What exactly is anti-Semitism? Was the aim of Nazism to have one language and one dominant culture, globally?

Key experts on the Holocaust, such as Elie Wiesel, often place some of the outcomes of the Holocaust on Jewish theology and the Jewish promotion of suffering as a virtue. This denies the resistance and rebellions that took place, such as those organized by Jewish prisoners in Treblinka, Sobibor and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Tarantino’s fiction film accentuates this resistance further, to incorporate the notion of Jewish vengeance. Whether this is authentic or accurate or not is irrelevant here. Raising the issue of Jewish vengeance is important, because it has been significantly overlooked historically, and theologically, despite the Old Testament God being one of vengeance. At Le Gamaar Cinema in 1944, Reich Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels (Sylvester Groth) is screening Nation’s Pride for the Nazi elite, including Hitler (Martin Wuttke). The cinema is discussed like a church, with the broadcasting of the ultimate Nazi propaganda film to venerate the new Reich. Shosanna Dreyfus, the owner of the cinema (Mélanie Laurent), a clandestine Jew who has escaped from the Nazi Jew hunter in the opening scene, intends to kill all the elite through a fire in the cinema, splicing herself into the film as ‘the face of Jewish vengeance’. Tarantino invites us to question whether authenticity is attainable or actually necessary. The fact the film is difficult to place, genre wise, challenges the audience. Setting, language, and period are all correct, with the attention to detail offering a beautiful verisimilitude, but characterization is exaggerated, not to the extent of parody but almost. Rather than denounce the director’s use of violence, it is important to understand how Tarantino’s use of violence as a director is, ironically, actually authentic in its very postmodernism.

Moving to a genre aimed specially at adolescents, it would be excessive to state that The Hunger Games film series takes its iconography, everything from its fashion aesthetic to set design, from the Nazis, or even the Nazi era. But a quick glance at even just a trailer for any film in the series indicates what has been absorbed from the Third Reich and fascism in general. Take the rebel salute, for example. This seems more like an Italian fascist salute, rather than a German, but it is still a fascist salute. The Italians used this form of salute in the 1920s, which was then adopted by the Germans in the 1930s, but there is no clear agreement on whether this practice was
ever employed in ancient Roman culture. Evidence from sculptures hardly points to a standardized salute. Here, in the main, it referred to specific victories in battles.

The film series is based on a trilogy of books for young adults by novelist Suzanne Collins. In the film *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 2* (Francis Lawrence, 2015), the rebel attire consists of jump suits. This is commented on self-consciously by Effie Trinket (Elizabeth Banks), a stylist from the Capitol who is now with the rebels. She does everything she can to point out how dreadful life with the rebels is. She is there for comic continuity, but concurrently she indicates that everything worn can be reborn and worn again. This adds to an unsubtle attack on capitalism, which thrives on a disposable culture, both in products and people, a theme *Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens* (J.J. Abrams, 2015) also plays with, having the central protagonist surviving as a scavenger. The Holocaust is the extreme form of disposable culture, where those not fit for work and production are murdered.

Where this film in the *Hunger Games* series really becomes part of a Nazi legacy is in the filming of District 12. At first the heroine, Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence), wants to go back to see what has happened to her district, and witness the true devastation, promoting the notion of affect that things must be experienced in the flesh. This is also a device on behalf of the rebel high command, to jolt her into action, and make her become their figurehead. Of this, she is oblivious. A further tactic is to use her to make propaganda movies, to show to all the districts and broadcast these to the Capitol. The film questions how women are used and manipulated as pinups. She returns to District 12 with a film crew who want to capture her authenticity. The Nazis made propaganda of this sort an art form, hence in this regard the film can be read as taking its cue from the Nazi era.

Paradoxically, the postmodern era appears to be concerned with the term ‘authenticity’. To understand the world as play circumvents extremism and neo-Nazism, given in the latter there is a lack of healthy doubt in doctrines. Katniss has tried speaking her lines on camera in a studio, with an artificial backdrop and this has been disastrous. People realize her strength is in her genuine, heartfelt reactions to situations. Both sequences use the same framing of the burnt bodies in a war zone, the people escaping being burnt alive. The destroyed District 8 and District 12 obviously resemble bombed out areas of Germany. When there is an air raid and a hit down below in the vaults of District 13, it is difficult to not compare the arrangements of the bed bunks to the Nazi camps. The postmodern repetition of war footage on television channels, such as the History Channel and Yesterday, adds
to the influence of the World War II aesthetic. The ability of the viewer to channel surf and intersperse viewing with selected viewing on various playback formats does not detract from the deep level of ingrained viewing via these other channels, where footage is fetishized. In many ways, the footage becomes a series of images outside of time and history, despite the voice-over narration and positioning of the images within the wider narrative.

The world in The Hunger Games, especially the Capitol of Panem, has a Nazi aspect to it with its work ethic, but so has capitalism itself. According to this ideology, as with Auschwitz, work will set you free. When the leader, President Snow (Donald Sutherland), addresses Panem, he claims the rebels’ actions will damage the peace, which is only achieved with everyone doing their collective share. Ideologically, this sounds like National Socialism. These citizens have a contract, which includes the yearly human tribute they give from each district for the games. Like Aztec sacrifice, it is embedded by the hierarchy that the only way for the whole of Panem and the districts to survive is for each district to offer up a human being each year to fight in the Hunger Games. This blood sacrifice is payment, and also works ritualistically and is a form of religious rite of passage for all involved.

The difference with Nazism is the aim of Nazism was to rid the earth of the Jewish race, whereas here the sacrifice is an intrinsic aspect of an imperial domination, based on class not race. This was the key specific aim of the war for the Nazis overall, with world domination secondary to this mission, but inevitably both went hand in hand. The extermination of the Jews was not a side issue for the Nazis or for Germany in general. The industrial process by which this was carried out was intrinsic to the Nazi war machine. We need to be careful in claiming this was an industrial process. As Richard Evans has shown, this suggests an automated process, away from the humans involved, plus the process was not an efficient one. The ritual of the game, satisfying Thanatos, or the death wish, has a religious trait. This is a future world, where traditional religion seems to have vanished, and where the unity that may have come through rituals and sacraments in the past comes through this bloodshed.

Using multimedia in all its forms, the broadcasting of the games keeps everyone enthralled, just as multiple channels today, be the content real or imagined, past and present, keep everyone ‘entertained’. The plethora of images, in an image-dominated world, has led to the conclusion that images have a higher value than truth. Regardless of the desire, a return to the real is still yet to be achieved. Richard Wolin in The Seduction of Unreason condemns thinkers such as Nietzsche as being ‘glib’. He finds it
offensive when Baudrillard writes that we have ‘dreamt’ of September 11, 2001, forgetting that this terrorist attack was not a single event that came out of nowhere, situating events of this nature in a vacuum and denying any causality in any direction. As noted with reference to Badiou, the real horror is when all thinking is cut off and all we are left with is an incontestable Truth. This nostalgia for the days where everything was apparently solid and unquestionable deifies the past and history, making it impossible to understand.

In *The Hunger Games* the mediated ‘games’ keep people away from protesting about their own conditions in the districts, which are of a far lower standard than those of the Capitol. The state centre keep informing the Districts they are lucky to be there at all, and this is the only way to keep the peace. In terms of science fiction, here we have the traditional dystopian and utopian paradigm, combining aspects of George Orwell’s *1984* and Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*. Analogies to the contemporary situation regarding terrorism are overt. Globally, governments perpetually develop an enemy, instilling fear and complicity in the populace, allowing them to be subjugated and the dominating regime to remain in power. There is a complex relationship between the government and the press in enabling such a power relationship. In a popular trilogy of books adapted into four films, the complexities might not be nuanced, and yet the message is strikingly familiar. Katniss herself is no revolutionary and does not believe in any new ideology propounded by the revolution, but seeing District 8 destroyed compels her to make propaganda movies that generate the popular message: ‘If we are going to burn, you are burning with us.’ Call this a nihilistic, or even a punk ethic; far from generating nihilism it generates activism. In this sense, it demonstrates the exact opposite of what Wolin finds in the Nietzschean ethic, and is refreshingly life-affirming.

Often it is difficult to see that questioning all forms of the construction of reality is benign, but this is inevitable when questioning challenges power. Those locked into the establishment (those whom Wolin defends), will try and resist any change to the status quo, be this in critical theory or in reality. Importantly, protest movements generated by students, and by those who have had enough of austerity across Europe, occurred at the same time as this film’s release. The rebel against the system is what makes these films so popular to the teenage audience. In this sense, it does possess a certain level of veracity and, like all good science fiction, mirrors the contemporary. How far we take this analogy into real politics is a good question. Here the hunters of animals, like Katniss, become the hunted.
Many may believe the Nazis were innately evil, while others conclude that their actions were evil, or even monstrous, or they were actual monsters. With Nazism and neo-Nazism, metaphors often get blurred in popular culture. Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children (Tim Burton, 2016), based on the novel by Ransom Riggs, refers to Nazis as monsters and here there are real monsters. Jake Portman (Asa Butterfield) and his grandfather Abe Portman (Terence Stamp) have a peculiarity for seeing monsters, called Hollows. There is never anything explicitly mentioned, other than by Jake, but it is assumed that the children in Miss Peregrine’s home are not only talented but are what today would be termed ‘special needs’. They are stuck in a loop, 3 September 1943, when a Nazi bomb was dropped on their home in Wales, and they repeatedly relive the same day. We know that Jake’s grandfather had to leave Poland and enter this home because ‘he was special’. When Jake confronts his grandfather about the peculiar talents of the children he suggests the term ‘special needs’, only because his classmates have been mocking him for believing the stories, such as the existence of a boy who could make himself invisible.

For Geoffrey Macnab, the monsters look as if they have stepped out of a Francis Bacon painting. Bacon was influenced by the Nazis, so this comment is appropriate. In this film, the Bacon Nazi aesthetic comes through in the form of the monsters that only the main protagonist can see. Unfortunately, critics like Macnab and Lenika Cruz, writing in The Atlantic, appear to have only watched the film once, and then blame their lack of understanding on the plot not making sense, or the film not even having one. Cruz wants the film to continue its seriousness, with its early references to the Holocaust, while at the same time saying it does not have a heart. A film largely set in 1943 must make references to the Holocaust in some way. The ethics of how we portray elements of the Holocaust can be questioned but to state that film narratives should stick to being serious is didactic. As with Tarantino’s aesthetic, Burton here transgresses the limits of genre by producing an original children’s film that tackles a difficult subject. More significant is the manner in which Abe tells stories and what is left unsaid, suggesting that the larger gaps in history cannot be resolved easily. Abe is demonized as monstrous by his own family, and is thought to have dementia, apparently making up stories to tell the young Jake. When asked follow up questions, he does not want to talk about it, and this is assumed to relate to the traumas around the Holocaust, which he may have witnessed but escaped.

The Hollywood Reporter attacks the scriptwriter Jane Goldman (co-writer of two X-Men and two Kingsman films) for the third act, claiming
the comic villain Barron (Samuel L. Jackson) is moving us away from the Michael Powell-style romance, which would create a more poignant film if sustained.\textsuperscript{42} This is suggesting that a film should only remain in one genre, and ignores decades of recent cinema. Jackson is a well-known actor, often appearing in Tarantino films, and Barron’s funny one-liners make direct reference to Tarantino movies. The skeleton action sequence on Blackpool pier is not the first reference in the film to Don Chaffey’s 1963 film \textit{Jason and the Argonauts}. Enoch’s peculiar power is to bring things back to life, the film offering a precursor to the third act, when Enoch shows Jake his skills, inserting hearts in scraps of animals and dolls and getting them to fight for fun. The odd thing about these peculiar talents is that they appear so natural. There is a questioning of bifurcated thinking, allowing us to go beyond the narrow stereotypes. Despite all the references, the Nazis remain explicitly anonymous, as if they can never be caught, reversing Tarantino’s scenario. Fundamentally, the film makes the observation that history cannot, and should not, be escaped.

\textbf{X-Television}

The overlapping debates concerning Nazism and neo-Nazism on screen were played out in 1997 when Roberto Benigni was awarded a best actor Oscar for \textit{Life Is Beautiful} (Roberto Benigni, 1997), set in a concentration camp and in the same year Ed Norton was nominated for playing the redeemed neo-Nazi Derek Vinyard in \textit{American History X} (Tony Kaye, 1997). Norton took control of the film, and a battle commenced with Kaye filing a $200 million lawsuit to have his name changed to Humpty Dumpy on the credits. Named in the global market after the Norton film, Netflix’s television series \textit{NSU German History X} (Christian Schwochow, Züli Aladag, Florian Micoud Cossen) examines the rise and fall of Nationalist Socialist Underground (NSU), an actual neo-Nazi terrorist organization in German. Historically, NSU was responsible for a series of crimes, including: killing eight Turkish German citizens and one Greek immigrant between 2000 and 2006, known as the Bosphorus serial murders; murdering a policewoman and attempting to kill her colleague; the 2001 and 2004 Cologne Bombings; and fourteen bank robberies.

The first episode begins by claiming this is not based on actual events, despite the names of the characters being those in the real NSU. The three-part series merges with documentary, using real footage.\textsuperscript{43} The movement was based in East Germany and was dedicated to creating a new fascist
state based on Nazi principles. Over the entire period they were operational there was a shift to the right across Europe, with an increase in the number of racist attacks. From this perspective, right-wing groups are protected by the centre and this is exactly what happened in Germany, and elsewhere. The white terrorist group killing German citizens were allowed to carry on their atrocities with the police blaming the very groups who were being murdered. Beate Zschäpe (played here by Anna Maria Mühe) was committed to trial on 31 January 2013 for ten counts of murder. She broke her two and a half years of silence in December 2015 and made a statement, saying she had known NSU members but had not been a member herself. She blamed Uwe Mundlos (played here by Albrecht Schuch) and Uwe Böhnhardt (played here by Sebastian Urzendowsky), and issued an apology, claiming she could do nothing to stop them.

The character arc in *NSU German History X* reveals the central character Beate as a shy girl with a difficult home life establishing an identity in this neo-Nazi group. Falling in love with a neo-Nazi, she needs to prove herself to the group and to him, doing so by robbing an immigrant, firing a fake gun, and calling for real violence. Despite the orders coming from Berlin regarding clearing immigrants from their town, the show is clear that Beate planned a systematic form of violence that galvanizes the group. She is to blame, despite being the one at first easily led. Before she joins the gang and becomes its catalyst, the group is mainly a bunch of thugs, dancing to neo-Nazi music. In a subtle sense, the first episode indicates this is her survival mechanism. She is getting nowhere in her former life; joining this neo-Nazi group is the way she can save herself and stay alive.

All sides can use violence. When her neo-Nazi gang attacks a group of young people she protects her former friend Sandra (Nina Gummich), revealing this neo-Nazi identity is not her ontological core. Beate goes to the job centre, where Sandra is working unaware of Beate’s current behaviour, but still carrying a scar from the previous attack. Beate appears turned on and excited by violence, kissing Ribby passionately after he attacks a man with a glass. Her behaviour, however, appears inauthentic. Uwe joins the army and is asked to be an informant on right-wing actions, but he tells them this is treason. Similarly, someone from the government approaches Beate when she is reading a travel brochure about Romania, saying they are looking for informants on right-wingers. The plot reveals how close the authorities were to all of their activities, allowing these activities to continue for their own purposes. This can be framed as state-sponsored terrorism.

We are asked to question our own complicity. One of their most disturbing activities is when Beate orders a woman with a baby to state repeatedly,
'I will not trapse on the lawn', causing the baby to wail. The simplistic enjoyment of power is portrayed expertly. While it is not made clear that the woman is an immigrant, or Jewish, Beate looks at the camera for the first time, breaking the fourth wall. This is a form of challenge to the audience: ‘You think this is bad?’ It also suggests nothing will stop them, that nothing is sacred. And it is a way of questioning the audience's enjoyment. Ethically, what should we be participating in, as an audience? With her look at the camera, there is recognition that in some senses we are also complicit in the violence.

Beate reveals her love for children via her friendship with Sandra, but also revels in a nursery being part of the Oklahoma bombing. Killing children is seen in this mindset as enjoyable and entertainment, not just part of their mission. *NSU German History X* directly shows how the neo-Nazis in Germany mimicked white separatists in the USA. Watching the news of the Oklahoma bombing on 19 April 1995, when 168 people were killed, including nineteen children, gives Beate the idea of carrying out an explosion. The text they follow is not *Mein Kampf* but an American text, *The Turner Diaries*. The frustration amongst the youth appears to be with the older generation, who will do nothing to stop their supposed oppression by the ‘other’. While Beate physically fights her mother, Uwe screams at his father that he would ‘turn up the gas chamber myself’. He sees it is disgusting that his mother works for low wages, and his professor father is also poor with, in his words, ‘their salaries being dictated by Jews from Bonn’. When his father calmly tells him there are no Jews left he dismisses this.

Could this form of programme actually promote neo-Nazism with a young audience who may not have been aware of the movement at all? While Beate and her young friends are repugnant, the adult world appears to be totally anodyne, non-committed and conformist, revealing the gap which neo-Nazism can fill, and almost suggesting there is no choice. The adult world is the world of the zombie, their brains having been removed by being slaves to the state. The neo-Nazi youth culture is in many ways resistance to the adult world, living in a post-war malaise. It is not so much the glories of a victorious Third Reich, looking backwards, that the neo-Nazis want to recreate, but a future. Beate has no job, with no real opportunity for getting one. These circumstances do not automatically lead people into becoming neo-Nazis, but it is the circumstances that are offered here as a part of the subtext of her trajectory towards fascism.

In a secret location, before they get the idea to plant a bomb, the gang listens to a neo-Nazi folk singer’s lyrics about causing explosions under parliament. Subcultures, group pressure and propaganda are all revealed
as relevant to instilling neo-Nazi ideology. Interviews for Leo Regan's documentary *British Neo-Nazis*, with ex-neo-Nazis, reveal that the promises of neo-Nazi groups are where they manage to win their following. For one disillusioned man, he became a neo-Nazi because he believed their propaganda, thinking that a Fourth Reich was on its way to create a place where there would be no gay men, men in dresses, smashed bottles, or drug addiction. Published on YouTube on 22 October 2013, this had generated 1,630 comments, including, ‘This is not National Socialism. These people are not National Socialists. They are themselves subhuman genetic trash.’ This gained sixteen likes. There is also resistance to this racism online with another comment: ‘The true skinhead is apolitical and anti-racist, my homeland is my neighbourhood.’

In the music scene in *NSU German History X* the folk singer at one point uses the word ‘magic’, stating that this is about transformation. Without the dress, the music, and the collective rituals there is no ‘magic’, just the boredom of their parents. This is not a movement that is attempting to change people’s minds and behaviour. They move towards violence via imitation and are neo-Nazis in this sense by affiliation, not by action. Indeed, as they become extreme, moving underground, they paradoxically become more part of the mainstream, their existence enabling mainstream society to function. The third part of the series focuses on this theme, with the police destroying evidence, and being part of the neo-Nazi group, with ties to Blood and Honour, a group banned in Germany since 2000.

While the politics is a game, the violence does have consequences. When playing a neo-Nazi board game, Beate once again looks at the camera provocatively, as if the viewer is her mother, who might correct her. This glancing is not sneering, and works as an invitation to share in her excitement, to become part of the action. Behind this is the notion that despite this being overtly about neo-Nazi belief, covertly this is about anarchism, and the rejection of the status quo. The skinhead culture that arose after punk in 1976 was formed in a period when there were few opportunities for young people. The neo-Nazis tapped their need for order and created a framework to galvanize the energy of the young. The physical training adds a military side to the gang, Uwe the leader despising those skinheads who get drunk and waste their lives. Beate documents the events through photographs, indicating that this is her telling her story and mapping their lives. Uwe has become educated in the army and at college, translating the first ten pages of an American text, *The Turner Diaries*, into German, believing this is their future.

Their first choice for planting the bomb is Buchenwald. For the NSU, Buchenwald is worshipped as a sacred site for the wrong reasons, and it
should be destroyed. The first episode ends with the gang’s car being blown up. Their violence can be construed as revenge, or at least reveals their own incompetence, asking us to question whether this is one of their own explosives going off. They have planned planting a bomb but at this stage they have not reverted to violence. On-screen text explains the true events behind the series: there is a first victim and then nine more, and states that a number of the scenes with Beate are fictional because no one really knows what happened. With legal procedures running, the film-makers are not prepared to overtly connect Beate with some activities concerning the neo-Nazi violent activities, as she denies her culpability, especially concerning the garage and bomb making.

Twice she is the instigator of extreme violence constructed in a gender-specific way. The young men need to prove their virility in front of Beate, by taking on these violent tasks.

While the first episode focuses on the gang within a gang, the second focuses on what we assume are their victims, the Turkish community, and the wider complicity of Germany. The first episode has long sequences where often nothing more occurs than young people drinking. Aesthetically and narratologically, the second episode is superior, moving backwards and forwards in time and space, making better use of prolepses and analepses. The murdered man’s origin is visually significant and the cinematography more expansive. The action moves back to the present, his shifting consciousness on his deathbed compounding our awareness of his life, and that of his daughter. The neo-Nazi forum www.stormfront.org, which has the stated aim of promoting white pride worldwide, has in its comments section on the programme that this is all propaganda anyway, although the ‘first part is worth watching’.

Neo-Nazis enjoy seeing themselves on screen, in any form, so it seems, even if their actions are random and moronic, but are unable to see the value in the second episode where the Muslim point of view is depicted. The second episode makes it clear that neo-Nazi beliefs are not at the fringes of society, nor are they in any way extreme in this context, but they are at the heart of the German system. This raises the question, if we position this belief as belonging to the outsider, do we then remove any ability to confront them. This show explicitly states this is the case, given the complicity of the police, as revealed in the third episode, where members of NSU are protected as informants. But if these beliefs are at the very heart of society, intrinsic to society’s functioning, is there any possibility of resisting or subverting them?

‘Anything is possible in that environment,’ states the police chief. It is immediately assumed that the killer must be a fellow Muslim, as the police
believe they are savages. The second episode immediately reveals the racism of the police, and their complicity with neo-Nazi behaviour, but the third episode is focused on the police behaviour. The Turkish family is aware of the blatant racism in Germany, and the endemic Nazi beliefs, but the police will not tolerate any suggestion of this. One investigator at the home of the dead man states, ‘there will be no mention of swastikas or Nazis’, despite the dead man’s cousin having his restaurant in Berlin burnt down by neo-Nazis. The level of denial is severe. At no time do the police consider this murder was caused by someone outside the Muslim community. The violence, according to the police, is caused by this racial group themselves, with even the murdered man’s wife becoming a suspect.

Obvious parallels exist. As with the neo-Nazis in the first episode, who scream at their parents for just sitting back and accepting the oppression of the system, the daughter wants her mother to fight back. The mother’s compliance stems from her having been saving money without paying taxes. Once this is discovered, this is additional evidence to the police of her husband’s murder being carried out by someone who knew him. One of the investigators states this was more like an execution than a killing, but there is no hard evidence that this is killing driven by neo-Nazi hate. Retrospectively, treatment of the family can be conceived as being racist, and is constructed as asinine, but they are attempting to find the killer following traditional detective work. They have a family vehicle wire-tapped, only to learn comically that the wife of the victim is concerned the police have not eaten enough. Muslims are depicted as the new Jews, the contemporary German state in part neo-Nazi. We have a neo-Nazi attack followed by neo-Nazi-style investigators interrogating the new victims, the neo-Jews. This comparison is more complex than initially appears. The wife of the murdered man openly prays in the police station, not hiding her religion as a persecuted Jew might do. The neo-Nazis are anti-law and order, and not on the side of the police. Indeed, they soon kill and maim police officers. Their philosophy is to overturn the state, which they believe has catered too much for immigrants, the praying in the police station right by a desk, whether realistic or not, being indicative of this.

Conclusions

Racism as a general term was originally spawned out of Hitler’s construction of the Jews, as a ‘race’ to face genocide. There have been periods when the Irish and Italians were considered ‘black’, and a lower race, but through
time they became ‘one of us’. Through an exploration of works for film and television the tensions between how Islam is perceived within Nazi and neo-Nazi discourse has been elaborated on. Writing in *The Jewish Chronicle*, Julie Burchill vehemently denounced the view that Muslims are the new Jews. Burchill claimed these comparisons were wrong because Muslim immigrants are mainly men, unlike those of the Kindertransport, and that immigration caused sex attacks in Cologne. She writes that Chinese and Indian people, along with Jewish, are innately industrious, yoked to the capitalist work ethic, and, unlike Muslims, do not have self-pity. In terms borrowed from Max Weber, all Jews, Sikhs, and other Asians, are secret Protestants, incorporated within the European model and obsessed with work.44

The white bourgeoisie ideal in this position glorifies work within the European paradigm as the defining ontology, dividing humans into categories. Those outside this paradigm are seen as sub-humans, a view that reinforces the collective identity of the apparent human culture. Following this logic, they acculturate better into Western societies and there are no real problems, while Muslims are the antithesis; they do not want to work and are parasites on the system funded by the taxes of other, diligent other people. There is an assertion of a wider belief that the European is the sovereign subject of the world.45 Underlying this rhetoric is a fear of the threat to this suzerainty, and an explanation for the increase in neo-Nazi behaviour and belief, and attention by the media. Fundamentally, the First World is no longer, ‘positioned in the first person with regard to the Second or Third Worlds’.46 Journalists and media commentators have the First World rule without question, incapable of observing how the challenges of the world may relate.

Burchill is right to point out a relationship between the perceptions of immigration and increases in anti-Semitic attacks, but she is wrong to blame this on Muslim immigration. Everything comes down to problems with Muslims and their ontology. Quoting a 2013 study by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, that found 64 per cent of German Jews avoid the public display of symbols that would identify them as Jewish, and only 28 per cent both report anti-Semitic incidents, Burchill blames this on Muslims, but she does so by offering no real evidence. Apparently, it is the way in which Muslims have moved into different countries, and do not work in them, that has made populations turn against anyone perceived as other, including Jews. Anti-Semitic attacks are blamed not on those carrying them out but on the Muslims. In a perverse logic, Muslims are the new neo-Nazis, with Muslim culture taking the West backwards; they are to be blamed for anti-Semitism, and they are the worst offenders.
There was a point in the late 1970s where people began to question this polarized rhetoric. The end of hardened truths worked against academics and popular writers, who made a name out of being polemical, those who claimed they knew the truth better than anyone else. How could you state one truth was better than another anymore, if since the late 1970s all truths were being challenged? But, in this (post)post-structuralist world, as typified by Burchill, it is as if an attempt to move from binary oppositions had not taken place. We are not simply back in the 1950s, where everything different is a threat to be condemned as evil from an ontological perspective. We are in a time where those who are demarked as assimilated and thought to be ‘good others’ are raised up as the antithesis of the evil that lurks waiting to steal jobs and women, threatening any semblance of peace. In this blinkered logic, one group is innately evil – and this racism is overlooked.

A Protestant work ethic is asserted, uniting certain groups with nationhood, while excluding others. Nations then construct the notion of greatness in the imagination, utilizing the media where they can. The British leader Theresa May’s meeting with Scottish leader Nicola Sturgeon in March 2017 was one such construction. Even before the meeting, the media reported that May was asking Sturgeon to conceive of the United Kingdom as being ‘great’ again, without Europe but with England and Scotland staying together. Playing the game of greatness and nationalism is supposed to gain votes against Scottish independence. Behind all of this is an analogy of war and invasion, stressed to make sense of events, even when terrorists are home grown, such as the London attacker in March 2017.

The denunciation of a race of people as innately malign comes with a rewriting of history. More dangerously, there is the blurring of race and religion, so any cultural differences are completely blotted out. There is no scope for any thought that Muslim culture has brought anything of significance to the world, or will. This rhetoric has been highlighted here because it is common and unextreme, within general media discourse. This is the worst kind of biological racism and functions to enable one group of people to assert their superiority over another. Within this paradigm, which frequently predominates, immigrants are always Muslims, stealing ‘our’ jobs and all Muslims are sex offenders, attacking ‘our’ women. This conjuring of hatred and fear leads catastrophically to the dismantling of the enlightened values and freedoms that Jewish culture within this rhetoric instigates.

Regardless of the conflict between Jews in Israel and their Muslim neighbours in Palestine and the Gaza Strip, this rhetoric is promoted by groups who use it to reassert their connection with nationhood. This occurred
during the referendum on the UK to leave the European Union in 2016, when many people from ethnic backgrounds voted for the UK to leave the EU, defiantly stating their allegiance to the island state and condemning migrants. For Burchill, politicians trying to win votes are supporting immigrants, and are going along with this apparent evil. Given the spate of Islamic attacks and the conditions of women in some Muslim cultures this is understandable, but it has been shown how popular culture, such as *NSU German History X*, allows for nuance. Who the victims are and who the perpetrators are at times is blurred, which is a far deeper approach. We shall return to how these media transformations are constructing discourse in Chapter 4.